

THE MAN WHO STAID

(Continued from Page 1)

Now comes that are not Indians, though, from the north, French and Spanish, about 1000, are back as if intent with the Indians upon the horses.

The three passengers sit in silence, waiting for the next station, Camp Date Creek, more than ten miles away. It will, at least, be a relief to reach it, if only to rest the contents that have become so worn that the wear they contain has ceased to be noticeable.

Suddenly Jose rises in his seat and looks long and earnestly off to the left, where half a dozen clouds of dust are rising in the air. They are as light that he can hardly tell whether they are only the white mists peculiar to the desert or men on horseback. As he looks, though, in each of the little clouds of dust concealed glimpse divides a group of horsemen, riding at full speed. He looks again—all are riding in the same direction—and as he drops to his seat again, simply, "Tobias," all know that he is confirming their worst fears.

He steps the horses, and, heading the men to the right, jumps from the wagon. Drawing his knife, he steps to the rear of the wagon, where the heavy trunk, placed there in the morning by Dusserier, is hidden. As he starts to cut the ropes that tie it to the buckboard, Dusserier divines his intention and turns on him sharply.

"No, no, you mustn't throw that off! There's bullet in it," he says, and leaning over he catches Jose's hand to prevent cutting the ropes that hold it.

"The Indians are Apache!" the Indians are Apache," says Jose, his fine growing power at his notes how rapidly they are approaching while the buckboard delays.

"I can't help it; but you mustn't lose my trunk," says Dusserier. "Can't you make him understand? I can't speak Spanish," he says, in a pleading voice, turning to Hawley. It is the first time they have spoken since before the marriage, and, eying him contemptuously, Hawley interprets into Spanish what he has said, and Jose, thinking that he, too, is acting for the preservation of the trunk, leaves it, and jumping into the wagon takes the reins once more into his hands and begins to ply the whip.

Hawley looks to see that his rifle is in order, and so he does so he glances at the pale face of the husband and wife behind him. As for himself, he is indifferent. Dusserier has begun to throw into the road the mail bags. His wife looks at him as if to urge him to cut loose the trunk, but remains silent, as if afraid to speak.

"He would sacrifice even her to save his gold," Hawley thinks bitterly.

How the horses jump under the lash! They, too, have scented the danger and seem to know that the race is one of life and death. The smooth, straight road stretches far ahead toward where it begins to climb the narrow pass through which it crosses the mountains. It is at that point that the Indians are trying to intercept them. How they ride! The usual rawhide quiet with which they are cutting their horses seem to be always in the air, while the long black hair of each streams out far behind. They are slowly gaining. Hawley raises his rifle and fires at an Indian in the leading group. A little pull of dust marks where the bullet strikes the ground to the left. No use to waste cartridges firing from the buckboard. One can only wait until all hope of escape by flight is gone, and then fight until death comes. In fight to their only hope.

José has dropped from the seat to his knees and bows his head over the dashboard that he may reach the further with his whip. How it whistles through the air as it falls on the flanks of the leaders and wheeler, leaving, whenever it falls, great trails that show plainly through the dust and sweat that cover the horses! He arrives to make the last fall where the skin is the tenderest. It cuts the thin, delicate nostrils of the wheeler, and raises on the bellies of the leaders' ridges that are almost as large as the veins, while he shouts at them with fierce Spanish curses. No wonder the horses grow wild with pain and fear and dash madly on. Fast as they go, though, they are hardly held their own with the pursuers! It is only a question of time before they are overtaken, unless something intervenes to save them.

A broken trace, a cracked spring—and then a few shots, a rush by the Indians, and all would be over; the next power by would find their mutilated bodies lying in the road, amid the riddled trunks and mail bags. No one speaks. They are almost at the point where the narrow road begins to climb the mountain pass. Behind them, less than a mile away, come the Apaches, their horses flecked with foam. Once the buckboard begins to ascend the mountain, it will be madness to drive as they have driven on the plain. To do so might throw them into the canyon hundreds of feet below or break their vehicles against one of the many boulders that lie the roadside. Already José is getting his horses in hand, as if to check their speed. Have the Indians have the advantage, and their sure footed mounts, unhampered by harness or wagon, will soon overtake the buckboard. This is a chance, though, and, finding Dusserier and his wife, Hawley, whose face is white and stern, says:

"Dusserier, from the top of the mountain it is nearly three miles into the next station, Camp Date Creek, and you and I, by getting out here, can stand off the Apaches until the wagon gets away. If we only hold them back for ten minutes it will be enough, for by that time the wagons can reach the top of the mountain and there will be no chance for the Indians to overtake us."

III.

As he heard Dusserier, for the first time in months he again looks into the eyes of the woman he had loved. How blue they appear in the white, pale face. They look pitifully into his, and his heart is filled with pity for this woman who sits there in silence with death near. Her eyes never leave his face, as if longing for him to speak, if only to comfort her fears. All the old love comes back to him, and he feels as if he would give his life to take her again in his arms. As he thinks she can never be, he puts the thoughts from him and to his soul comes the pain that she has brought to him.

"Don't we always offend?" asks Dusserier, his lips set with fear.

"No," answers Hawley, with bitter contempt and a sour hatred, born of the past experience, in his heart; "it is the old story for every wife and we had

hated do it right about where the others do, and where we can get in among the Indians."

"I couldn't care less! I would be willing to pay anything for—" began Dusserier, to quit abruptly as he caught the same look in Hawley's eyes.

"You coward! Are you going to come with me or not?" asks Hawley, as once in his coat ride in hand.

The horses under the close rain that has been drawing have slackened their speed, for they are already in the pass.

"Yes, yes, of course I will go with you," comes from the white lips of Dusserier, as he sees Hawley preparing to spring into the road. Hawley reaches within his breast, and taking from it a purse holds it to the woman.

"Mamie, this is all I have," he says simply; "use that my mother gets it. You know her address."

Mme. Dusserier reaches out her hand as if to prevent him from leaving the buckboard. There are tears in her eyes as she meets his, and her voice trembles as she implores him not to throw his life away for her sake. Almost before she can frame the words he leaps from the wagon into the road. In an instant he gathers himself together and looks toward the buckboard. Dusserier is still seated in it, holding his wife as if to prevent her jumping from it. A wave of exaltation seems to pass over Hawley as he sees this man, who was to have stood by him in facing the Apaches, while his wife escaped, thus leaving him to his fate. For an instant the buckboard almost stops, as if in response to some command from the woman; while Dusserier, who seems beside himself with fear, has taken from the driver's hand the whip and is striving to lash the horses into greater speed. Hawley smiles to himself bitterly. He can yet overtake the buckboard, or, easier still, he can hide among the boulders and brush that line the canyon from the Apaches, and after they have passed easily make his escape. No; better to let all end here than to let her know he had played the quid. She took off his hat and threw it into the air as a signal for Jose to drive on. He does not even look where it falls. He will never need to again he thinks as he crouches behind a boulder.

He raises his rifle and fires at the foremost of the Indians who are galloping into the canyon. In an instant they slip from their horses and, after firing a few shots at him, begin to climb the mountain side. This is what he expected. They will climb the mountain side and probably shoot him in the back from above; but before they can do so and remount their horses the buckboard and its passengers will be beyond pursuit. He had feared that they would rush in on him, and his life would have been thrown away in vain. It was for this he wanted Dusserier to come with him. Two might do what one could not.

Enraged at the escape of the buckboard through the delay he has caused them, the Indians fire volley after volley at him until the canyon echoes so with report that he cannot tell from which direction the shots are coming. He looks up toward the summit to see if any of his enemies are above him, and as he does so he catches a glimpse of the buckboard, with a woman's white face looking backward. An instant and it is gone. Thank God! He knows they are on the mesa now and she is safe.

So they are. A straight, level road is before them, and at its end and they can see, against the dark side of the mountain beyond, a cluster of adobe buildings, with a flag floating high in the air over the parade ground. The horses are again running as if mad, with the stings of the whip that seems to be forever falling. The shots in the canyon die away in the distance. A mile is passed, and then another. Already the wild race has been noticed at the post, and, while they are still a couple of hundred yards away, the ringing notes of the bugle are sounding above the hard breathing of the horses and the rattle of the buckboard; for to the old soldier in command such driving means that there is success needed.

As the buckboard passes the sentinel, a few words explain all; and, while the foam covered team still stand trembling from their wild race, a troop of cavalry dashes by at a gallop to the rescue of the man who is facing such odds in the canyon.

The woman who has come in with the buckboard watches the blue coated men with staring eyes. How slowly they seem to go, though she knows that the troop has never ridden—even in its wildest charge—as it is riding today.

The husband approaches her and places his hand upon her arm, as if to lead her into one of the houses, out of the sun. She shakes his hand off without looking at him. The few women in the post gather around and urge her to compose herself, but she does not seem to heed them. She can only stand and watch the cloud of dust which marks the progress of the cavalry. They have crossed the mesa, and, as they disappear from the horizon beyond, all know that if the Indians are still there the canyon will be filled with the smoke and fire of the cavalry carbines.

An ambulance, in which is seated a hospital steward, approaches where she is standing, to receive orders from the commander of the post. When she hears that it with its escort is to follow the troop of cavalry to bring back the dead and wounded, despite all that can be done she takes a seat in it, and when it returns she is clinging to her breast the form of the man who had staid behind in the canyon.

As the ambulance stops a little crowd gathers around it and looks into it curiously.

The sergeant of the escort, as he enters the colonel's study:

"Captain Dillon and the trop go home in pursuit of the Indians."

"And the man who stood them off while the buckboard got away—how is he?" says the colonel, nodding toward the ambulance.

"He was all shot to pieces and died before we got there," is the sergeant's reply.—San Francisco Argonaut.

A. Proctor.

Judge (after the jury has voted against his judgment in acquitting a man)—this man has no liberty—but watch your coats and underclothes.—Flagstaff Bulletin.

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